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BÊTES NOIRES & Dark Horses

The Story So Far...

1774. The Empress of Russia has gifted King George III with the continent's last surviving woolly mammoth—an event that's drawn various delegations to George's court. But among the various diplomats are two masked Faction Paradox representatives, members of a group (or possibly "cult") with a distinctly unusual relationship with time. The Faction's ambassador Mother Francesca claims 1774 is a focal point in history—meaning that whomever controls this junction could well control the future.

However, Francesca's probably not the only one to realise this. The Americans, led by Charles Barnum Cleeve, have given the King a *second* gift—a female "savage" from the Polynesian islands whom they call Mayakatula.

Which may be a problem, because Mayakatula's just escaped captivity, triggering a heart attack in one of her jailers by simply pointing a bone fragment at him. Witnessing her escape is Isobel, a palace serving girl who's been just itching for something exciting, exotic and romantic to happen to her.

This isn't necessarily what she had in mind.

www.faction-paradox.com

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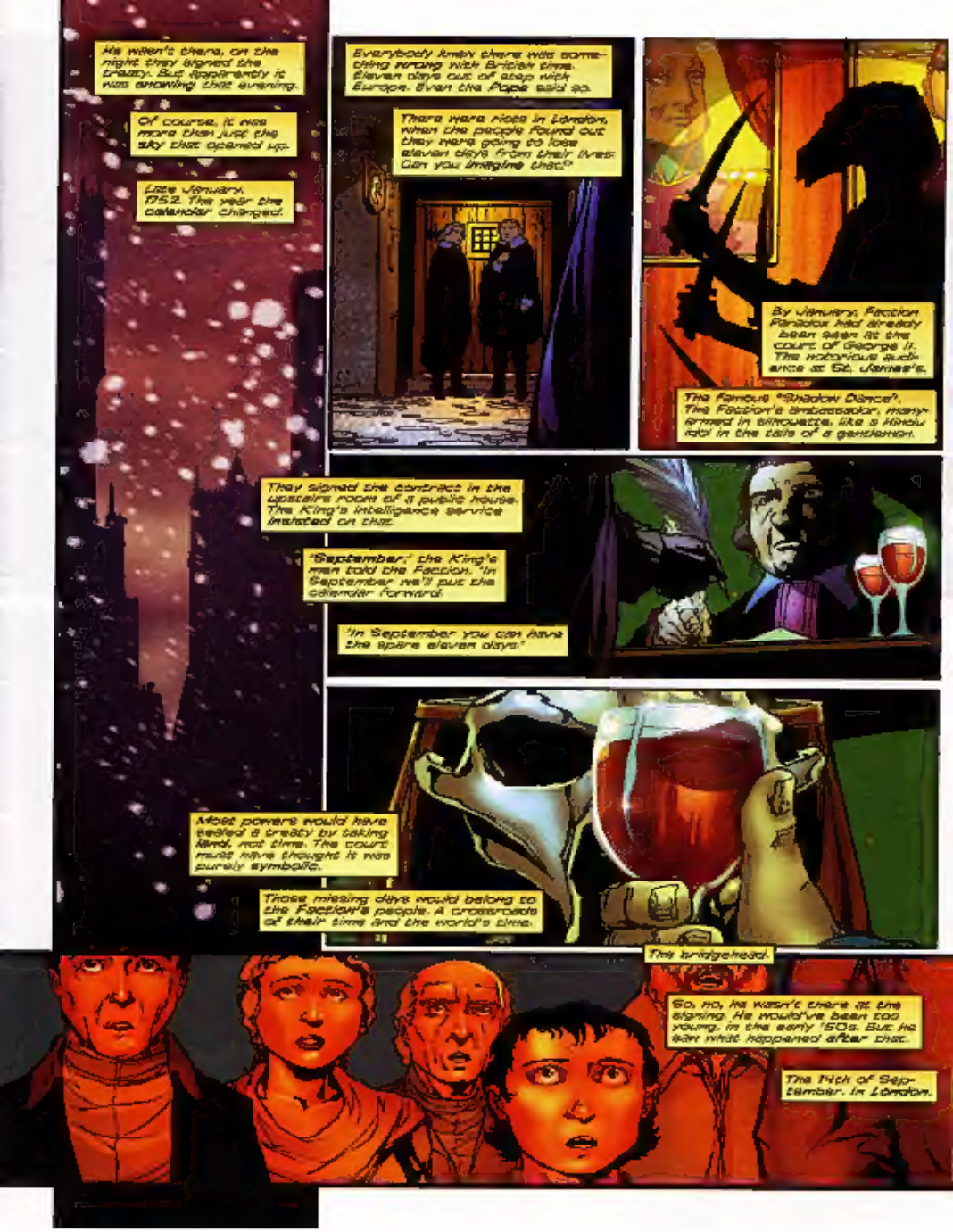

He wasn't there, on the night they signed the treaty. But apparently it was snowing that evening.
Of course, it was more than just the sky that opened up.
Late January, 1752. The year the calendar changed.
Everybody knew there was something wrong with British time. Eleven days out of step with Europe. Even the Pope said so.
There were riots in London, when the people found out they were going to lose eleven days from their lives. Can you imagine that?
By January, Faction Paradox had already been seen at the court of George II. The notorious audience at St. James's.
The famous "Shadow Dance". The Faction's ambassador, many-armed in silhouette, like a Hindu idol in the coils of a gentleman.
They signed the contract in the upstairs room of a public house. The King's intelligence service insisted on that.
"September," the King's man told the Faction. "In September we'll put the calendar forward.
"In September you can have the spare eleven days."
Most powers would have sealed a treaty by taking land, not time. The court must have thought it was purely symbolic.
Those missing days would belong to the Faction's people. A crossroads of their time and the world's time.
This bridgehead.
So, no, he wasn't there at the signing. He would've been too young, in the early '50s. But he saw what happened after that.
The 14th of September. In London.

BÊTES NOIRES & Dark Horses

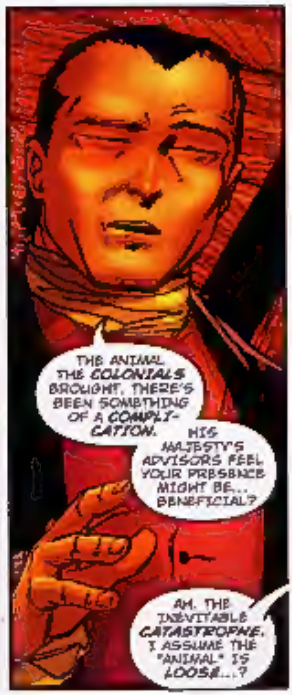
One soul in a thousand still remembers.

The day the calendar changed. From the old Roman system to the new Gregorian version. It'd been changing all over the world, of course, but in London...

In London you could see it. Just for a minute — just for a moment — you could see the eleven days the British had lost, as they passed into the care of the Faction.

And you could see what they'd built in those eleven days. The shadow of the Age. The intersection in history.
The intelligence service must have realigned, then. Realised that the Faction has more than just some superstitious foreign cult.
Naturally, these days the service likes to claim it has no knowledge of such things, and usually it amuses him to keep up the pretence.
But now the Faction's come back to the world...?

MMM. PERSONALLY, I ALWAYS TRY TO BE EXCEPTIONAL.
I'M SURE YOU DO, COUNTESS.
COMMANDER SABBATH.
NEWS FROM THE PALACE, I'M AFRAID. YOUR SERVICES MAY BE REQUIRED AFTER ALL.


THE ANIMAL THE COLONIALS BROUGHT, THERE'S BEEN SOMETHING OF A COMPLICATION.
HIS MAJESTY'S ADVISORS FEEL YOUR PRESENCE MIGHT BE... BENEFICIAL?
AH. THE INEVITABLE CATASTROPHE. I ASSUME THE "ANIMAL" IS LOOSE...?

"AHH... QUITE. AND I BELIEVE THE COURT FEELS THAT AN OFFICER WITH YOUR INTERESTS --"
"OH, I UNDERSTAND. "WE LIVE TO SERVE THE FATHER OF THE NATION", ISN'T THAT RIGHT?"
"HOWEVER LUDICROUS HE MIGHT BE."

WELL NOW. THIS IS A FINE DANCE AROUND THE MULBERRY-BUSHES, EH?
YOU TOLD ME THIS CREATURE OF YOURS WAS BROKEN IN, MR. CLEEVE.
YOUR MAJESTY, WE GAVE STRICT INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW THE BEAST SHOULD BE CONFINED. IF YOUR MEN COULDN'T FOLLOW THEM, WELL...
IT WAS, UM, MR. SNADDON, Y'MAJESTY.
THINK HE'S HAD A HEART ATTACK.
AND WHAT ABOUT THIS POOR CHAP, MM? LYING THERE STIFF AS A BOARD, AND NOT A MARK ON HIM.
WE'LL HAVE TO PROVIDE A DECENT PENSION FOR HIS FAMILY. SEE TO IT, WILL YOU, HOBGATT?
YOUR MAJESTY, I PROMISE YOU, WE'LL HAVE THE BEAST BACK UNDER CONTROL QUICKER THAN YOU CAN SAY MEGABEKWA-MUSH.
THIS IS LONDON, A BRUTE SAVAGE ISN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO HIDE FOR LONG IN YOUR GREAT CAPITAL, AM I RIGHT?
UHM... ME, Y'MAJESTY?
HMM. AND WHAT'S THE POOR QUEEN GOING TO SAY, WHEN SHE HEARS ABOUT ALL THIS FUSS? SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE CONSTITUTION FOR IT.
WE'LL NEED TO CANCEL THE PAGEANT, OF COURSE. THE BIG HUNT WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW.
NO, YOUR MAJESTY.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD DELAY THE PAGEANT, BUT THE HUNT CAN GO AHEAD NOW. AFTER ALL, WE HAVE THE PERFECT QUARRY.
WE'D LIKE THE COURT TO REMEMBER THAT WE WARNED THE AMERICANS ABOUT THE CREATURE. NOW IT'S LOOSE, THEY'LL NO DOUBT NEED HELP TO TRACK IT.

HM. WELL, THAT'S VERY *ENTERPRISING* OF YOU, AMBASSADRESS.
A HUNT THROUGH LONDON, EH? IT'S QUITE *IRREGULAR*, OF COURSE...
YOUR MAJESTY, I HAVE TO *PROTEST*.

WITH RESPECT, I DON'T THINK MOTHER FRANCESCA'S *SUITABLE* FOR THIS KIND OF THING. IF YOU TAKE MY MEANING.
WE'VE GOT A SAYING WHERE I COME FROM. "NOBODY GETS *BETTER* IF THEY'RE LEARNING FROM THE SICK -"

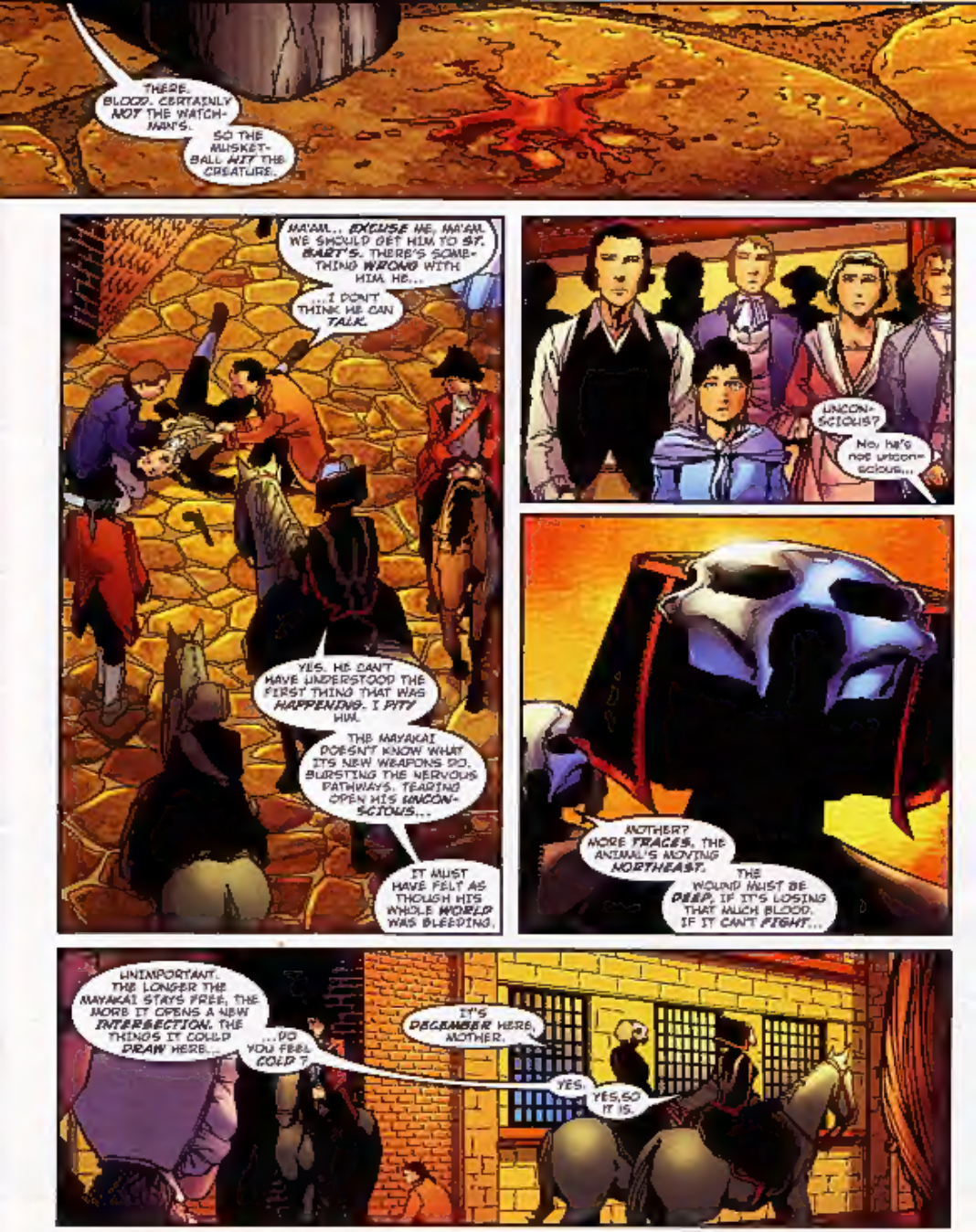
NO. THE ANIMAL IS *DANGEROUS*. I'M SURE AMBASSADOR CLEEVE MUST *ACKNOWLEDGE* THAT.
IT SHOULD BE RUN TO GROUND *NOW*.

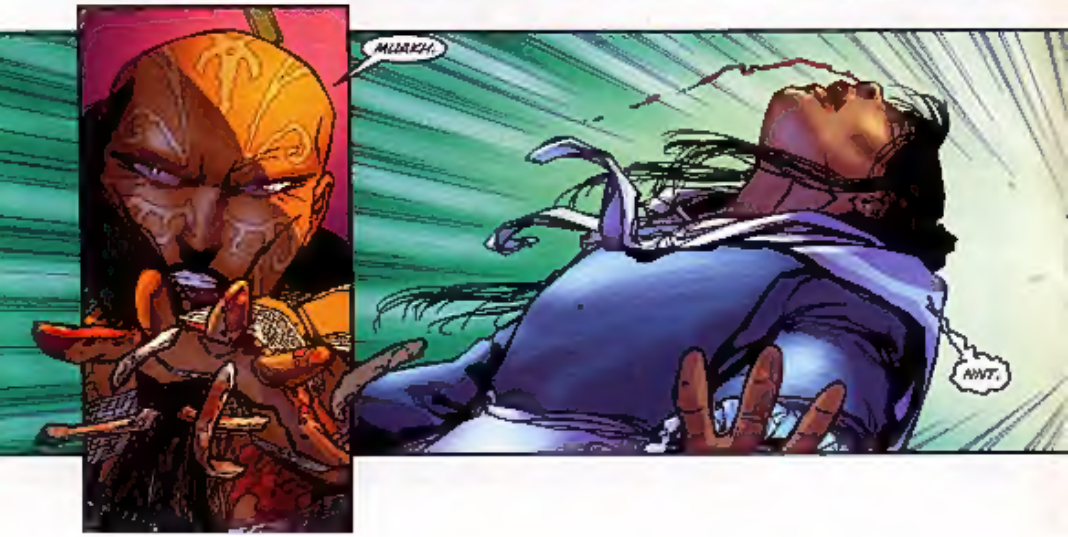
WELL, QUITE, QUITE. THIS THING'S SAVAGED HALF A DOZEN GOOD MEN *ALREADY*. HEAVEN KNOWS *WHAT* IT MIGHT DO OUT IN THE CITY, MM?
SOMETHING OF A *SPORT*, I SUPPOSE, HOBGATT... DO WE HAVE HORSES FOR THE *OTHER* AMBASSADORS?
Er... cumia, y'majesty.

YOU THINK THE AMERICANS *EXPECTED* THE ANIMAL TO ESCAPE...?
POSSIBLY. WE DON'T KNOW WHY CLEEVE EVEN *BROUGHT* IT HERE. CERTAINLY NOT JUST AS A *GIFT*.
HE MUST KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES IF IT'S LEFT *UNPOUND*.

AND DESTROYING IT MAY BE DIFFICULT, NOW THAT IT'S FREE TO ARM ITSELF.
IT HAS A *KILLING* BONE. IT WON'T HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING *OTHERS*
History can miss a lot of things, but most of them aren't mammoth-sized.

For example: Nobody was there to see it when she found the mouse.
They don't have mice, where she comes from.
But she must have realised she was being hunted.
... THE "ANIMAL" IS A FOCUS. WHOEVER HUNTS IT DOWN WILL BE IN A POSITION OF DOMINANCE, AND THE AMBASSADORS MUST KNOW THAT.
IT'S A VERY BRITISH KIND OF RITUAL, DON'T YOU THINK?
MMF.
She must have known she'd need a more varied arsenal.
THE MAYAKAI WEREN'T JUST GIVEN TOOLS. THEIR ENTIRE CULTURE IS A FORM OF WEAPON.
THEY CAN STILL PASS THE CONDITIONING ON TO OTHERS, EVEN NOW THEIR WAR'S OVER.
WE CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
She was very nearly finished with the mouse when the horsemen rode past.
They don't have guns where she comes from, either.
IF HIS MAJESTY ASKS, TELL HIM THAT HIS POOR COLONIALS ARE RETIRING FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
WE'RE HAPPY TO LET MOTHER FRANCESCA DO ALL THE HARD WORK.
Nobody was there to see what happened next, or at least, nobody who ever talked.
Although quite a few people heard the shot.


THERE. BLOOD. CERTAINLY NOT THE WATCHMAN'S.
SO THE MUSKET-BALL HIT THE CREATURE.
MA'AM... EXCUSE ME, MA'AM. WE SHOULD GET HIM TO ST. BART'S. THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH HIM. HE...
...I DON'T THINK HE CAN TALK.
YES. HE CAN'T HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE FIRST THING THAT WAS HAPPENING. I PITY HIM.
THE MAYAKAI DOESN'T KNOW WHAT ITS NEW WEAPONS DO. BURSTING THE NERVOUS PATHWAYS, TEARING OPEN HIS UNCONSCIOUS...
IT MUST HAVE FELT AS THOUGH HIS WHOLE WORLD WAS BLEEDING.
UNCONSCIOUS?
No, he's not unconscious...
ANOTHER? MORE TRACES. THE ANIMAL'S MOVING NORTHEAST.
THE WOUND MUST BE DEEP, IF IT'S LOSING THAT MUCH BLOOD. IF IT CAN'T FIGHT...
UNIMPORTANT. THE LONGER THE MAYAKAI STAYS FREE, THE MORE IT OPENS A NEW INTERSECTION. THE THINGS IT COULD DRAW HERE...
...DO YOU FEEL COLD?
IT'S DECEMBER HERE, MOTHER.
YES.
YES, SO IT IS.



Nobody was there to watch the church, so nobody knows whether she had to break in.

(Really, it's lucky it wasn't a Sunday. But then, His Majesty would never have approved a hunt on a Sunday.)

Having found her way to sanctuary, she then started to put everything together.

Piece by piece.

This is where the witness testimony starts.

SA MUA'NE KA.

AHH!

I... PLEASE, IT'S ALL RIGHT. I CAME TO FIND YOU, MR. SNADDON SAID YOU ONLY UNDERSTOOD RITUAL, SO I THOUGHT... THE CHURCH...

...YOU, UM... YOU KNOW MR. SNADDON?

I THINK YOU HURT HIM.

MUAKH.

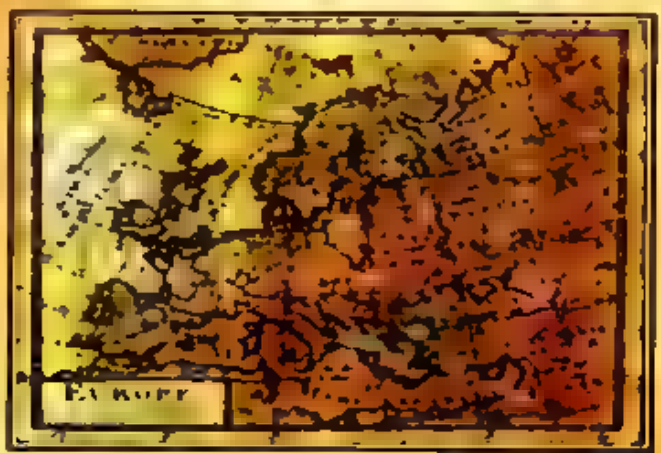
NNT.

THE GAZETTEER

THE INTELLIGENCE WORLD 1744 1752

The strictest instructions have been issued to the servants of the [royal] household regarding the proper cleaning of His Majesty's quarters [ ], with particular attention to those areas in which His Majesty makes his toilette, is visited by his barber or is attended by his doctors. It is common knowledge in intelligence circles that a reward of forty pounds has been offered by agencies known to be in the employ of the court of King Louis for any servant who would betray the royal trust by providing His Majesty's hair, blood or faecal matter [ ]. A few among these agencies attach a Catholic importance to such [items], accepting without question that by obtaining the same it may be possible to plunge His Majesty further into his current malaise or by obscure turns affect the balance of his reason. — Captain James William Bey, 1788.

This is how legend likes to remember King George III as he made [illegible] Caligula, [illegible] suppressing [illegible] which left him feeble at best, monstrous at worst. And it is true that in the later years of his life his insanity became as violent as it was by arts. At one point during the worst days of 1788 he even attacked the Prince of Wales, his own son and heir, rising from his seat during dinner to smash the Prince's head against the wall [illegible] himself to be dangerously [illegible] [illegible] in a manner which would have appalled [illegible] [illegible] the King's [illegible] were becoming apocalyptic as he began to see himself as the only sane man in a world beset by [illegible] [illegible] and blood-thirsty revolutionaries. Toward the end of his life he even came to [illegible] that Britain had been flooded and that the palace around him was in fact Noah's Ark. Perhaps strangely, by that stage he saw himself as one of the beasts other than as Noah himself.



[illegible]

And yet officially his madness didn't begin until 1788, years after the war with America and the last embassy of Faction Paradox. Nor did he show any signs of becoming a great tyrant. In 1757, when an assassination attempt was made against the French King by a disgruntled, and not entirely stable, ex-soldier, the would-be assassin was tortured for the pleasure of the crown before finally being torn apart by

Alchemic surgical practices employed by the Service until a few years ago

horses in front of a crowd of spectators. By contrast, when a similarly confused domestic servant attempted to stab King George in 1786, the King assumed that the poor woman had to be disturbed and politely asked his guards not to handle her so roughly. Despite his German ancestry, he really was remarkably English.

Posturing in the Dark

The Service, like most of the world's great spy organisations, had always taken an unhealthy interest in the occult. It was only to be expected: a group of self involved men, obsessed with secrets and bound by peculiar initiation rites, couldn't help turning into a kind of cult. Things were much the same all over Europe, but Britains Service was older than most and therefore a lot more obscure.

Furthermore, it had been "tainted" by a hint of necromancy ever since its early days. Though there'd always been spies and assassins in the grand courts of Europe, the Service as a coherent body was created in the late 1500s, during the reign of the great War-Queen Elizabeth. In those days, before the Age of Reason and the Age of Electricity, there was no line drawn between the black arts and the science of espionage. Walsingham, the Queen's spy master-general, knew this full well and created an inner circle of five "departmental" spymasters himself, plus four men representing the four mystical bodily humours of blood, venom, choler and black bile* to oversee the more esoteric aspects of intelligence and counter intelligence. It's a well known fact that the Queens personal astrologer was one of these Masters, and at least three of the original five had a keen interest in alchemy, which was then seen as a perfectly respectable and scientific pastime. Indeed, when he was later forced to flee the country, the royal astrologer convinced the Holy Roman Emperor that he could transform base metals into gold and eventually claimed to have drawn up plans for a workable "golem" driven by the captive forms of angels and/ or demons. The surviving third-generation copies of his notes make very little sense even by ritual standards.

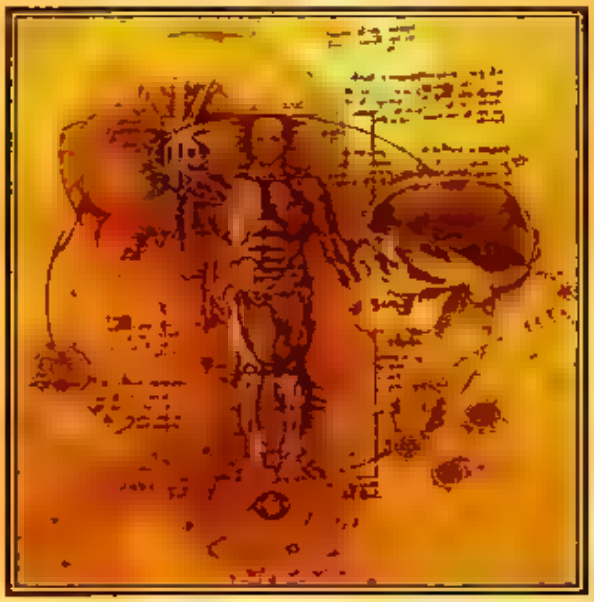
Angels and Politicians

Demons had always played an important part in Service lore, although the modern meaning of the word is subtly different to that used by the original spymasters, who took a much more Biblical view of things. Demons were the counterparts of angels, and angels were seen as messengers rather than as active participants in the troubles of the Earth, so much so that in some coded texts the symbol for "angel" is the same as the symbol for "language". When the Service devised its paragrammaton, its

* The belief in the four humours, now regarded as the work of a rich dotty was fashionable even as late as the eighteenth century. In most other medical sources of the 1500s the second of the four fluids was called "phlegm" rather than "venom". It is not clear why the Service re-named it, but it could well have been a simple matter of pride. No self respecting spymaster would want to refer to himself as the Master of Phlegm.)

own "family tongue", the implication was that the cipher itself was some form of angelic entity: a living voice, through which the secrets of the world could be transmitted. Likewise, in certain Service tracts "demon" is used as a euphemism for "false information". Even the demons which supposedly activated the corpus gematria golem only took the form of words, not of anything more tangible.

And then there were the codes. There were always codes. While most of the world's spies saw cryptography as nothing more than a useful tool, the Service considered the coding and decoding of messages to be major ritual acts in themselves. From the Services point of view the map of the world was a map of knowledge and counter-knowledge, of secret patterns written across the face of the Earth which only the correct ceremonial process could interpret. The "Holy Grail" of the Service – a prize so great and so unlikely that no leading member since the early 1600s had seriously tried to find it – was the Ain Soph, loosely described as the "Understanding of God". Tradition held that this was a single cryptic word, a master key which would be able to decipher any of the world's codes (meaning, any secret on Earth) if applied in the correct fashion.



The designs for the corpus gematria, copied c. 1690.

Hardly surprising, then, that so much of Service ritual was taken from the Jewish Qabalah, from the alleged secret wisdom of the pre-Christian Hebrews. Field agents working for the Service would generally choose codenames taken from Old Testament lore, and the groups more mundane ciphers were frequently based on the Qabalahs complex symbols and numbers. Not that the Service was in any way Jewish, naturally: an organisation dedicated to protecting King and Country had to be violently Protestant, at least in theory. But if the Services beliefs were Christian, then it was a kind of bloodstained, thunder-from-on-high Christianity, rooted firmly in the older Biblical texts. This wasn't a forgiving universe where Christ would one day return to bring salvation to the world. This was a universe of ancient hidden secrets, of spoken words which could bring whole worlds into existence, of swift and brutal vengeance against traitors and idolaters. A Serviceman's God was a jealous God, and only the upper ranks of the Service were privy to His arcane mathematics.

So when Faction Paradox first arrived in the world, with its stories of a War in Heaven, the Service accepted the truth of it long before any other Earth-bound agency. The appropriate words were whispered into the appropriate ears, and those members of the British court who weren't quite so ritually-inclined were told not to ask too many questions. More importantly, it was the Service which knew how to explain the Faction's presence to the easily-befuddled King, in such a way that he'd understand the situation... at least well enough to survive it.

Needless to say, what the Service told him took the form of a warning. Much as the Services upper ranks craved some of Faction's secrets (and the Faction's first ambassador had dropped just the right hints that his people might have possessed the Ain Soph, or how else would he have been able to

cross the border between the world and the War?), the King's agents knew a rival power when they saw one. Above all other concerns they were sworn to protect the throne, and it's possible that in Faction Paradox they saw the age-old, ungodly horrors which had worshipped Melech in the days before Christ

The World Before the Lightning

By 1774, the Service had become as complacent as any other powerful, well-established clique. It had wielded a huge amount of power in Britain over the previous centuries, steering the course of European politics by rumour and subterfuge while occasionally sabotaging any "unseemly" political dissent within Britain itself. The arrival of Faction Paradox in the 1750s had briefly forced it to become more aggressive, but ultimately the affair had just allowed the Service to convince the King that greater powers had to be given over to the Star Chamber (the title now given to the inner circle of spymasters, the Service having taken the name in the 1640s). In short, the Service was fat and sluggish but then, in those last days before the revolutions in America and France, you could have been forgiven for thinking that the world had become fat and sluggish too.

In fact, at this stage the only truly "active" members of the Service were the Ratcatchers, a cadre of agents who'd originally been created to maintain discipline within the ranks of the Servicemen themselves. With their black regalia and bizarre pentagram-trimmed hoods, by modern standards the Ratcatchers hardly looked fit for their role as top-secret operatives. But then, they were designed to provoke a kind of holy fear, and were never meant for duty beyond their own "house". The Service had always been paranoid about the possibility of its agents defecting, partly because spies can so easily be bought and partly because the work itself provided a constant temptation. Servicemen were trained in ritual, but unwarranted, unsupervised ritual could lead to possession by all kinds of "demons" (In the Services view, it wasn't so much a problem of agents being corrupted by evil forces as of agents being distracted by false information... in Hebrew, of course, "devil" is the word for "liar".)

Captains Cole, Halpert and Regan, c. 1777

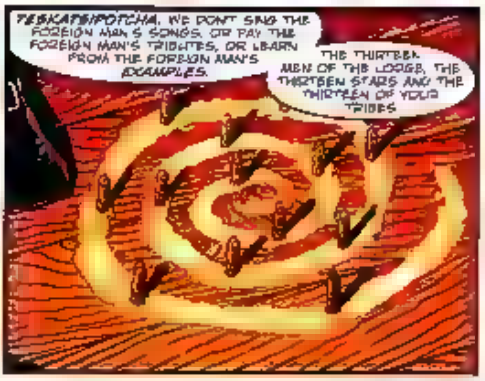
The Ratcatchers were the solution. With its sense of moral superiority and its belief in Old Testament justice, the Service was naturally attracted to the idea of ceremonial trial. Whenever any agent appeared compromised, it was the Ratcatchers' place to restrain him and ascertain his true intentions, by whatever means became necessary: a process which sometimes entailed divining the truth through a ritual slaying of angels, but which more commonly involved severe physical abuse, something which must surely have created as many traitors as it exposed. The fact remained, however, that during the 1760s and 1770s the Ratcatchers were the only combat-ready Service agents close to the throne. Most Servicemen with military experience were posted elsewhere, in Europe or the colonies, and although a handful of officers remained in London (most notably Sabbath, who was to play a major part in the events of 1774-81) there was no other standing force on which the Star Chamber could call. The Ratcatchers, intended to be judge and jury for errant "family men", would soon have to take on much broader responsibilities. And by 1776, the Star Chamber itself would be forced to come out into the open.

The consequences of this still haunt the world today

TOLD ME THE ANIMAL HAD OLD ANADRON OUT ON HIS BACK JUST BY LOOKIN' AT HIM
AN I DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT THOSE AMERICANS ARE UP TO
SHH
THAT'S THEIR GUEST-ROOM, THAT IS.

TESKATSIPOTCHA, FATHER OF MY FATHER'S SEED. NATURE IS GOD UNDER THE EARTH, WHOSE ROOTS FEED ON THE FAT OF THE HUMBLE. WHOSE FRUIT GROWS BITTER AND STRONG
WE'RE HUMBLE MEN IN YOUR SERVICE

OUR LAND IS YOUR LAND. WE SERVE YOUR CORN, AND THE CORN OF MAN SERVES YOU.
WE'LL WATCH THE BORDERS OF YOUR SACRED COUNTRY. WE'LL DRAW BLOOD 'ROUND YOUR FIELDS AND YOUR HIGHLANDS
US OF THE THIRTEEN, WE KEEP THE FOREIGN MAN FROM YOUR SOIL


TESKATSIPOTCHA, WE DON'T SING THE FOREIGN MAN'S SONGS, OR PAY THE FOREIGN MAN'S TRIBUTES, OR LEARN FROM THE FOREIGN MAN'S EXAMPLES.
THE THIRTEEN MEN OF THE LODGE, THE THIRTEEN STARS AND THE THIRTEEN OF YOUR TRIBES

WE'LL PROVE TO OUR FATHERS THAT WE'RE YOUR DEVOTED NOW NOT THE LESSER RACE OF MAN WHO FED YOUR LAND BEFORE US
WE'LL MAKE AN OFFERING OUT OF THE IGNORANCE IN THEIR HEARTS
NOW THAT'S MORE ESTING

IT'S AN OLD AMARAZI RITUAL, ISN'T IT? THE LAST PEOPLE TO TRY IT MUST BE EXTINCT BY NOW
I THOUGHT CANNIBALISM WAS UNFASHIONABLE IN THE AMERICAS THESE DAYS
(SIGH) OF COURSE, NOBODY'S EVER TO DROP IN ON HISTORY'S MORE BIZARRE MOMENTS.

NOW, I DO BELIEVE I *KNOW* YOU, SIR. YOU'RE THE MAN *SABBATH* ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, BUT WE'RE *JUST* SIMPLE *VISITORS* HERE. WHAT WOULD HIS MAJESTY'S *INTELLIGENCE* MEN WANT WITH US ?
SIMPLE VISITORS WITH SIMPLE *TASTES* OBVIOUSLY

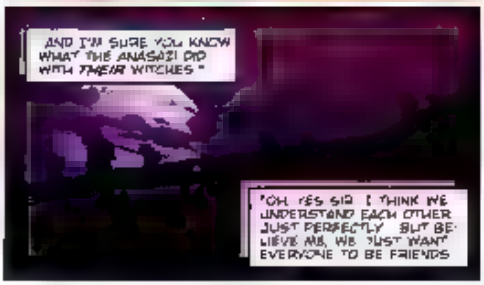
PIG'S HEARTS. GOOD ENOUGH TO PASS FOR *HUMAN*, I PRESUME
TELL ME DO THE INDIANS KNOW YOU'VE STOLEN THEIR GODS AS *WELL* AS THEIR CONTINENT?
ALL GODS ARE GODS OF *LAND*, MR SABBATH CAN'T CONTROL YOUR LAND UNLESS YOU CAN *APPEASE* IT

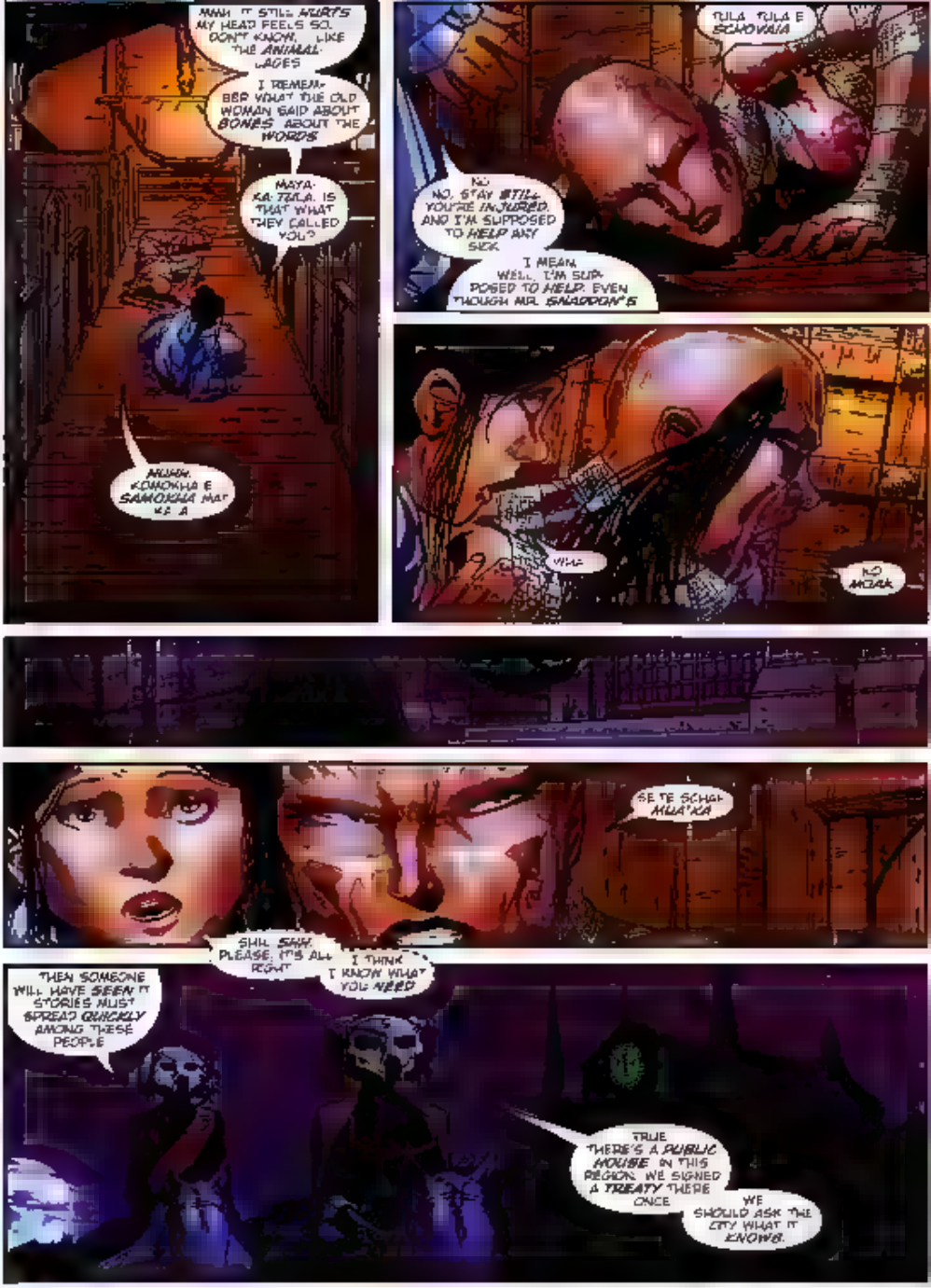
Y'SEE WE'RE *JUST* LOOKING FOR A LITTLE *INDEPENDENCE*. A LITTLE TERRITORY ALL OUR OWN THAT'S NOT SO MUCH TO *ASK*, IS IT?
IF THAT *MEANS* GETTING CLOSER TO THE TRADITIONS OF OUR HUMBLE NATION, THEN, WELL, THAT'S THE *LEAST* WE CAN DO.

AH. AND I WONDER WHETHER YOUR MR. *WASHING-TON* KNOWS ABOUT THESE "SIMPLE" WITCH-LODGES OF YOURS?
YOUR *PET* I'M ASSUMING YOU *EXPECTED* IT TO GET OUT OF ITS CAGE
TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MR. SABBATH, I *DO* JUST ONE OF THOSE *THINGS*.

BUT IT'S GOOD TO CAUSE SOME *MULLABELLOO*, DON'T YOU THINK? JUST LIKE YOUR ROYAL *MOM-MOTH* UP THERE
EXCEPT THAT THE MAYAKAI AREN'T *PART* OF THIS WORLD ANY MORE SO UNLESS YOU'RE TRYING TO *RE-EDUCATE* HER.
THIS *RITUAL* PLANNING ON CAUSING MORE "MULLABELLOO"?
NOW, MR. SABBATH, YOU'VE GOT US ALL *WRONG*. WE'RE JUST PLAIN-TALKING *GENTLEMEN* HERE. IT'S *FACTION PARADOX* THAT'S YOUR ENEMY.
GOD FORBID WE SHOULD HARM THE *KING*.

AH, YOU *FORBID* BUT PLEASE UNDERSTAND, PROTECTING THE CROWN'S PART OF MY *DUTY*


AND I'M SURE YOU KNOW WHAT THE ANASAZI DID WITH *THEIR* WITCHES "
"OH, YES SIR. I THINK WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER JUST PERFECTLY. BUT BELIEVE ME, WE *JUST* WANT EVERYONE TO BE FRIENDS


MMH. IT STILL HURTS MY HEAD FEELS SO. DON'T KNOW. LIKE THE ANIMAL LAGES
I REMEMBER WHAT THE OLD WOMAN SAID ABOUT BONES ABOUT THE WORDS
MAYA-KA-TULA. IS THAT WHAT THEY CALLED YOU?
MUHH. KOMOKHA E SAMOKHA MAT KA A
TULA TULA E SCHOVAIA
NO NO. STAY STILL YOU'RE INJURED. AND I'M SUPPOSED TO HELP ANY SICK
I MEAN WELL, I'M SUPPOSED TO HELP. EVEN THOUGH MR. SNADDON'S
WHA
NO MOAK
SE TE SCHAH MUA'KA
SHH. SHH. PLEASE. IT'S ALL RIGHT
I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU NEED
THEN SOMEONE WILL HAVE SEEN IT STORIES MUST SPREAD QUICKLY AMONG THESE PEOPLE
TRUE THERE'S A PUBLIC HOUSE IN THIS REGION. WE SIGNED A TREATY THERE ONCE
WE SHOULD ASK THE CITY WHAT IT KNOWS.

THE KING ISN'T HAPPY MR SNADDON IN YOUR ABSENCE HE'S BEEN RELYING ON HOBGATT OF A L PEOPLE
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE INTENDS TO DO WITH THE MAMMOTH? NONE OF THE HANDLERS SEEM CLEAR ON THE MATTER

AHH THAT'S THE QUESTION. HIS MAGNIFICENT "PAGEANT"
ALMOST AS IF HE'S GRASPING AT SOME RITUAL OF HIS OWN, I'D SAY
HMM
YOU'RE WELL THEN?

OH, A LITTLE HEART TREMOR ISN'T THE WORST SHE COULD'VE DONE TO ME DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT MY TIME IN HISPANIOLA ?
THIS ISN'T THE COLONIES. MR SNADDON I THINK THE COURT EXPECTS SOME FORM OF CIVILISATION HERE
THEY STILL HAVEN'T CAUGHT THE ANIMAL. YOU KNOW

NOR WILL THEY ALTHOUGH I'M SURE FACTION PARADOX HAS TAKEN AN INTEREST ?
MMM. I CONFESS, I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE KING'S PATIENCE WITH THOSE PEOPLE WE LOATHES MASQUERADES.
THEY REMIND HIM OF HIS FATHER

WELL, SPEAKING AS THE WOUNDED I THINK I'LL LET THE HONOURABLE MR. HOBGATT TEND TO HIS MASTY FOR NOW
ISOBEL ?
OH, MR SNADDON I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE AND
UM, I WAS JUST WONDERING DO YOU REMEMBER, WE USED TO KEEP PEACOCKS HERE?

I WONDERED IF ANYBODY KEPT ANY OF THE BONES.
I WAS JUST CURIOUS
The pieces are coming together now. Although it'll be left to someone to remove it.

So nobody's there to hear His Majesty when he sets out on his own kind of hunt
SUNSET THEY'LL BE SEARCHING BY NIGHT SOON, HOBGATT
WISH I COULD JOIN THEM OF COURSE BUT YOU CAN'T HAVE THE SOVEREIGN DALLYING AROUND LONDON ON HORSEBACK. AN YOU?
BESIDES HARDLY FITTING COMPANY HMM? THE AMBASSADORS THE COLONIALS
NO, SIR, Y'MAJESTY SIR
WITCHES, HOBGATT WE'LL DEAL WITH THEM SOON ENOUGH. YOU AND I
YOU UNDERSTAND I'M SURE
Which is to say, nobody's there who might appreciate it
And the others, the ones who try to make history their business
TESKATSIPOTCHA. THESE ARE THE FIELDS OF THE FOREIGN MAN. THESE ARE THE LANDS OF OUR ENEMY
OPEN THE SKIES! LET ONE BEAST CONSUME ANOTHER!
Even they haven't considered everything
I CAME I BROUGHT WHAT YOU NEED TO WELL YOU KNOW
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOBODY KNOWS I'M HERE. I PROMISE
No. For now a lot of the tracks are going to be left covered.
HAH. "BONES FROM A PEACOCK"
I WAS RIGHT I REALLY SHOULD HAVE KILLED HER
Although some are at least following the right scent.
FRANKLY I DON'T THINK SNADDON KNOWS ANYTHING IT'S CLEEVE'S GROUP THAT CONCERNS THE COURT MOST
OH. I WOULDN'T WORRY THEY'RE JUST SHEER EVIL
NOW THE ESCAPED "ANIMAL" THAT'S LESS PREDICTABLE.

So here they all are, a menagerie of hunting dogs and a stable full of stalking horses. All chasing the same thing, one way or another.
NORAKH
Hunting is a lot like hunting lightning. You're either there or you're not there.
MOTHER, THERE'S SOMETHING IT FEELS.
YES. THE FOCUS HAS CHANGED. LIKE LOSING OUR BALANCE IN TIME.
ARE WE TOO LATE?
The sky opens up and the future's dragged down from heaven, ready to be harnessed and shaped by whoever catches it.
She was there. In the night it all really started at the intersection.
What else can you say?
AH. IT'S SNOWING AGAIN.

Fact or Paradox #3
Coming soon to a mammoth near you!

The *Reliquary*

Makandal Slivers

When the people of the west remember the great revolutions of the 1700s, they remember France and they remember America. They never remember Hispaniola.

Yet Hispaniola, one of the French occupied territories in the West Indies, was the site of the most successful slave revolt in human history. By 1740 the island was engaged a protracted guerrilla war, the Negro revolutionaries using any means available to cripple the plantations and dispatch the French slave masters. It began with the obvious things, the poisoning of wells and the ceremonial crucifixion of European prisoners. Before long the war had become a religion in itself, a mix of half remembered African spiritualism, bloody Catholic ritual (adopted from the slavers) and sheer brutal necessity. It was *voodun*, and it bore such a similarity to the methodology of groups like Faction Paradox, with its bones, its fetishes, its desperate desire to use fear as a ritual weapon, that it could well have been the factor which first brought the world to the Factions attention.

Makandal was the Black Messiah of Hispaniola, a rebel prophet and terrorist leader who presented himself as both soldier and magician, organising European style training camps as well as utilising stolen European firearms. When he was eventually captured and sentenced to death in 1758 he swore that no white authority could hold him and that he'd simply change form when burned at the stake. Whether he changed into anything other than ash is a matter of debate. The record states that as the fire consumed him, the stake unexpectedly collapsed: to Makandals followers, anxiously waiting for a sign, it was like a trigger being pulled. The snapping of the wood marked the exact instant when Makandal became not only a martyr but one of the *lost*.

There are, of course, other testimonials. At least one variation explains that Makandal died (or changed, or "revealed") just as the world entered one of its many intersections with the War in Heaven, presumably leaving him stranded at a kind of historical crossroads. In later years various charred fragments would be presented as slivers of Makandal's stake or skeleton, a gloriously *voodun* version of splinters from the True Cross, though in truth it's doubtful that anything *corporeal* survived the fire.

Mr Bell's Codex

On the 8th of February, 1761 London was hit by an earthquake. This is a matter of record, although the capital had long since convinced itself that such things only happened to people who insisted on living in heathen, uncivilised places which weren't British. Exactly four weeks later, on the 8th of March, it happened again. This caused some concern, not least because it had barely been half a decade since the great Lisbon earthquake, which had killed thousands, razed much of the city to the ground and provoked the usual discussions about a judgement from God. And everyone knew that London was at least five times as sinful as Lisbon.

But the man who displayed the most concern was one William Bell, a resident of the Lots Cottages housing development in Bermondsey. Mr Bell was convinced that a [illegible] earthquake was due in London on the 23rd April, a date which would certainly dwarf Lisbon's trouble by a factor of ten, the specific proof for this [illegible] he presented in a [illegible] entitled:

Bell's work is rich in [illegible] and [illegible] but its most important feature is a rambling, hand-written [illegible] which [illegible] pages in [illegible] numbered, map [illegible] the designs [illegible] of an [illegible] which [illegible] the author doesn't seem [illegible] have understood. What the [illegible] [illegible] to suggest is that beneath any part of Old London there are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Stamp Duty

Vol 2 Oct 2003

(i.e. your neighborhood-friendly Letters page)

BITS OF BUSINESS FROM GODFATHER PEARSON series editor

Faction Paradox #1 hasn't yet hit stands as we did it, so our letters page is unusually dull at the moment. Even so, that gives me plenty of room to [illegible] Faction Paradox #2 [illegible] Fall of Paradise [illegible] your first [illegible]

•

First off, a Faction Paradox primer for any one who needs it, so...

• **What is Faction Paradox?:** A group of immortal time travelling saboteurs and sub-refugees - essentially, the criminal-cult to end all criminal cults. The Faction seeks to subvert history to its own ends, preferably by letting its rivals kill each other off, then swooping in to seize whatever's left - presuming the Universe survives.

• **What is the War?** The War of The War in Heaven [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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Faction Paradox

THIS TOWN WILL NEVER LET US GO

PROLOGUE to the upcoming novel
by Lawrence Miles

11.32 p.m. Six minutes before the first of the ox kills in the square, so right now nothing's burning except for grilled fat.

Unless Inangela's got one we don't know her yet but we'll take the straightforward, statistical things for granted. She weighs [illegible] pounds, she's slightly shorter than she needs to be, although obviously high heeled boots are dealt with. For someone in her position and despite having the kind of [illegible] back but that looks as if it's covered as camouflage for rig-marks with broken straightening, it's bright red at the ends where a drunken experiment with scarlettine unexpectedly became a fashion statement halfway through. But we're talking about fashion statements then it's hard to get away from the mask. Contrary to what we might expect by now, the mask doesn't mark her out as a member of a death-obsessed queer-bashing cult any more than combat pants on a twelve-year-old boy mark him out as a member of a mothers junior. So what does it say about her? This not-quite-fetishwear, this mask that looks like bone but really must be some kind of mass-produced polymer? Does it say that she's showing off? That she believes in something specific? That she doesn't believe in anything specific and that this is her way of proving it?

That she liked the colour?

Now this alleyway – wally. This archaeological layers of advertising – is set just off the square, so Inangela's got a good view of the town's central, fat, pustulated artery from where she's sitting. [illegible] just about enough room. There are places to eat in the square, most of them stalls with their counters spewing the air breathing out hot pagrikes mixed with the rest of the exhaust fumes. Maybe it's a rare and exquisite combination. Visitors are always quick to point that there's no difference between one vendor and the next, but as you walk around the stalls wherever you go and the smells never contradict each other, however savage the competition might be between the vendors, it's as if all those razor-thin slices of sausage are raising their metaphorical eyes to the hope and feeding it to the operator, who has the knives tight among his muscles. Things are frying, tonight and every night. It sinks into the air in the same way it sinks into the soil, so the air is green, hot in the alleyways is like every vegetarian's memory of how grey-brown used to taste.

The town needs to be fed, especially now it's under fire. Inangela used to have a theory about that, which happens to be true, although maybe not literally true. When she was younger, her friends used to ritually steal and eat parts of Neighbourhood Watch signs. Cats being the cleverest and most resourceful things you can possibly do when you're fifteen (or really – in the sense that even if it wasn't

exactly an initiation (each theft will at least a small superstitious event). Inangela's theory held that without all these signs, without that symbolic protection, the Great Urban Horror could tunnel its way up out of the ground and start to feed on the surface-world. She still tends to see things that way. The sacred pattern of town planning has been broken, and the thing which used to lie buried under the streets — under every street that ever existed — has been set free, hence the omens in the bill-hoardings and the lights in the sky which less interesting people believe to be long-range missiles.

Just a few hours from now Inangela is going to have her own encounter with the Great Urban Horror. Or at least she's going to think so, but by that point her consciousness will have been subtly altered by (in no particular order) chocolate, alcohol, onion rings and at least one mildly occult narcotic. All of which makes her sound incredibly selfish, as if it doesn't take more than a few deep-fried chemicals to turn her into the centre of her own urban legend, but let's be fair. This town is a town in wartime, this generation is a generation raised on shellfire as well as spare ribs. The food isn't the only thing that's liable to hyper-stimulate the nervous system.

We all have to go through these initiations. Little ones, anyway. We'd like to think that Inangela hides her face behind a big shiny bat skull because she wants the attention, and to be honest that's not entirely untrue. But she's young. She's only nineteen. If this weren't a time of war then we'd say she just needs to get it out of her system, although really it's more a kind of longing. Cut off from the rest of humanity by so many things — by her thoughts, by her words, by a culture which showers the world around her with warheads and acts as if it's perfectly normal for the War to go on forever, and of course by her exemplary fashion sense — it'd be truer to say that she just wants to be where the action is. To have one of the rockets detonate less than six feet from her body, to be able to say, in a world where everyone sees things happen at a distance, that she's been in the middle of the Warzone and Dear God she knows what it feels like. We might have guessed as much.

Because we are, for the purposes of this story, the elders and archons of Faction Paradox. That's the kind of audience Inangela wants, so that's the audience we're going to give her. The ones who watch from outside history, who pay attention to impeccable creatures like her because obviously she deserves to be rewarded for being more interesting than anyone else. A clique of ancient, high immortal beings who reject the ways of the ruling class and smile on those who wear the right badges — well, it could almost be a kind of wish-fulfilment. So tonight — for one night only — we'll be in charge of the Faction, at its best, at its brightest, at its shiniest, before the worst days of the War and before its lapse into sheer ruthless bloody mindedness. We'll watch everything Inangela does, we'll applaud her as she either (a) saves or (b) destroys the world as she knows it, and come the dawn we'll rate her adventures out of ten. Although she may lose marks for that coat.

By the time the rockets reach the square at 11:38, Inangela has already left the area. At midnight precisely she'll become a heroine.

Let's start there.

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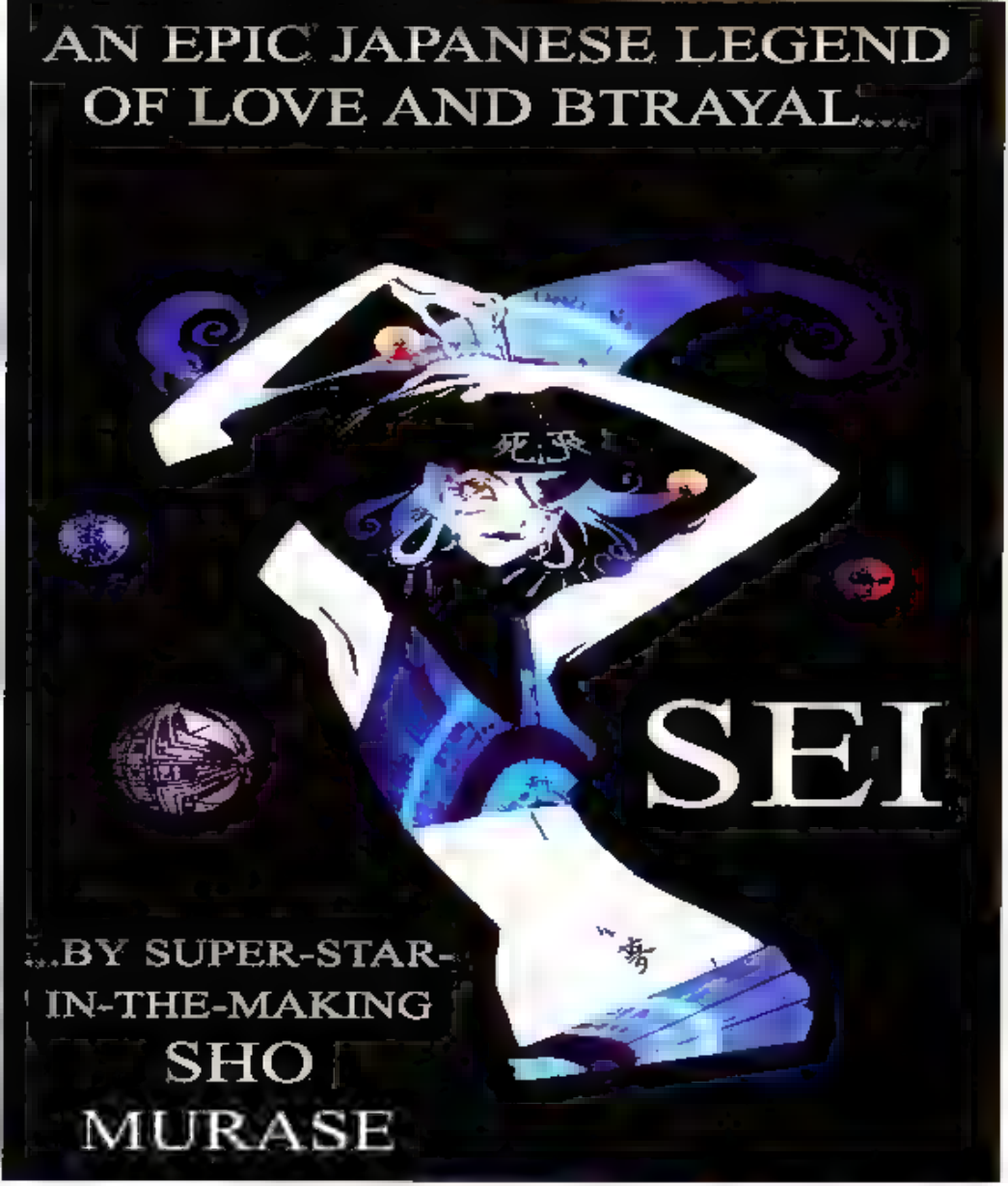

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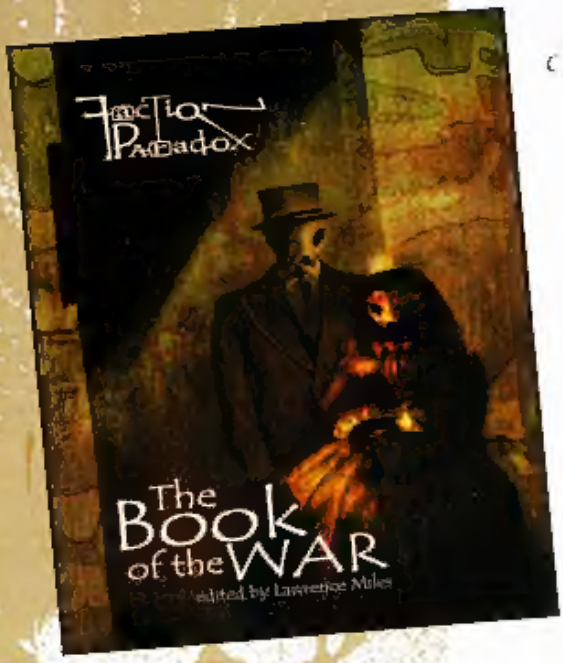

before the comic, there was...

The Book of the WAR

Faction Paradox

Before the *Faction Paradox* comic series, there was the War: the terminal face-off between two rival powers and two rival kinds of history, with only the renegades, ritualists and subterfugers of Faction Paradox to stand between them and pick the wreckage clean.

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